

News Release



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Have Fun, But Play Safe in California State Park's Winter Recreation Areas; Weekdays, Non-Holidays Best Time to Visit

Whether you are visiting a SNO-PARK or a snowmobile trailhead, discover for yourself why California is fast becoming one of the best winter recreation areas in the western United States.

"With the steady increase in the use of these areas, visitors are encouraged to travel to these recreation venues on weekdays and non-holidays," said California State Parks Deputy Director David L. Widell.

The Winter Recreation Program currently consists of two programs, each with its own source of funding. The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation (OHMVR) Division of California State Parks manages the SNO-PARK Program, funded by permit sales that are placed in the Winter Recreation Fund, and the snowmobile grant program that is funded by the OHV Trust Fund.

SNO-PARKS are snow-cleared parking lots that provide the public direct access to popular cross-country ski trails, snowmobile routes and snow play areas. They also offer sanitation facilities. SNO-PARKS are easily identified by the distinctive brown highway signs that direct visitors to them on the main highways in the snow country in the central Sierra Nevada.

SNO-PARKS provide opportunities not only for snowmobiles, but also for cross-country skiing, dog sledding, and for others who just want to play in the snow. The Division works with the California Department of Transportation, County Sheriffs, U.S. Forest Service, and the California Highway Patrol to provide safe family recreation, snow plowed parking lots, and maintained restrooms.

Each vehicle that is parked at a SNO-PARK site must display a non-refundable permit. Permits are available at businesses that are located near SNO-PARKS, visitor information centers and metropolitan-area winter recreation stores. The sale of these permits funds SNO-PARK operations, including snow removal, sanitation and signing.

A \$5 non-transferable day permit is valid at any SNO-PARK, and may be used only for a single day. A \$25 season permit may be purchased. It is valid on any day during the November 1 through May 30 winter season. A permit must be displayed on the left side of the vehicle dashboard where it can be seen clearly from the outside. Any vehicle parked at a SNO-PARK without a properly displayed permit is subject to a \$75 fine.

Parking is on a first-come, first-served basis at all SNO-PARKS, and there is no guarantee of a space. Overnight parking, including in-vehicle camping, is allowed at all SNO-PARKS with some exceptions. When parking overnight, the vehicle must be staked with eight-foot high poles (1" by 2") at each corner to help protect the vehicle from accidental damage by snow removal equipment. Tent camping or other sleeping outside of vehicles in parking areas is prohibited at all SNO-PARKS.

State Parks issued this word of advice to all SNO-PARK visitors: If you are planning to rendezvous with family or friends at a SNO-PARK, make certain that you have a backup meeting location in the event the facility at your destination has posted the "sorry, full" sign. You can avoid a very awkward situation if you take the time to plan ahead.

All visitors are asked to bring litterbags and take your refuse home for proper disposal. Trash receptacles are not provided at most SNO-PARKS.

Further information on this California State Parks winter program, including a brochure showing the location of all available SNO-PARKS, may be obtained by telephoning the SNO-PARK Hotline at (916) 324-1222. Or, you may write to: SNO-PARK Program, P.O. Box 942896, Sacramento, California 94296-0001.

A 2001 survey of SNO-PARK visitation revealed interesting results. More than 68 percent of the nearly 3,000 people surveyed were there to simply play in the snow, while 10 percent were accessing trails for cross-country skiing. Twelve percent used the area for snowmobiling. Even more interesting is the ethnic makeup of those who enjoyed the areas. Of the individuals surveyed, 42 percent were minorities, largely Hispanic.

According to the DMV, nearly 19,000 snowmobiles are registered in California, a 180 percent increase since 1983. California is fast becoming a favored snowmobile recreation area in the western U.S. Trail grooming operations are facilitated through interagency agreements and contracts and undertaken by USFS personnel and volunteers. The majority of good snowmobile riding takes place between the 5,500 to 9,000-foot elevation on existing roads owned by the USFS, and county and state highways that are closed to other vehicles during the winter. There are more than 2,000 miles of groomed trails statewide in 25 state-sponsored grooming areas. The 30 snowmobile trailheads that access the groomed trails also accommodate snow play and cross country skiing.

For further information on additional snowmobile recreation areas, please telephone (916) 324-4442, or write: Winter Recreation Program Coordinator, P.O. Box 942896,

Sacramento, California 94296-0001. Information is also available on the web site under OHMVR: <http://www.ohv.parks.ca.gov>

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